

Pebmarsh Parish Council – Chairman’s Report : April 2015 – May 2016

A brief summary of matters dealt with by the Council since the last Annual Assembly in March 2015.

- (1) **Telecommunications Mast.** The first few months of this period was dominated by our attempts to get a mobile phone mast for the village. I won't go through the whole history of this saga here , because we have previously put out a number of communications about the issues involved. We conducted a Survey of the village , which was overwhelmingly in support of this ; there was however a co-ordinated campaign of objections to the last site surveyed by the Government appointed contractors , Arquiva. Mainly as a result of this Arquiva withdrew the site from consideration and declined to survey an alternative site (near Hunts Hall) on the grounds that they had insufficient time to do the necessary work before the Government grant money ran out in March 2016. The Government grant for this was not renewed in March 2016 , so this is - regrettably - the end of the matter (unless we can persuade a major provider to finance it , which is most unlikely , because it wouldn't serve a sufficient number of people to make it worth their while).
- (2) **Planning.** We are asked to comment on about 2 or 3 Planning Applications per month. These are primarily dealt with by a Planning Sub-Committee consisting of myself , Jim Holder and Jackie Tufnell. They range from such matters as applications to cut back or fell trees within the Conservation Area making extensions or other alterations to residences. If we consider it necessary we discuss the position with those making the application or those closely affected . We then send our comments , if any, to Braintree District Council (who I'm afraid take little notice of our views...)

We also commented (in December 2015) on the suitability of various sites in the village that have been put forward for possible development for the purposes of The Braintree District Local Plan a draft of which will be available later this year. Our position on this is that we would not necessarily object to a limited amount of “infilling” in the village (but

probably not in that part of the village which comprises the Conservation Area), which could involve moving the Village Envelope to encompass it. We are however generally opposed to “back-filling” (ie building behind existing dwellings). Because of the lack of facilities in the village (shop , doctor and so on), it is highly unlikely that that any development of any size will be proposed (or permitted) in the village. If anything that is likely to be at all controversial emerges in the draft plan , we will call a public meeting to discuss it.

(3) **The Playground.** This continues to be a major drain on our resources. It is inspected every year by an organisation called Rospa (the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents). They come up with expensive recommendations – such as replacing uprights in play equipment that look as if they have another 10 years of life in them. We , of course , have no option but to comply , and have just approved expenditure (including topping up the bark) of over £2,000.

(4) **The Mark Collett Bench.** Having ascertained that the land on which this has been (finally...) erected (opposite the Kings Head) belonged to Highways , we contacted them to ask their permission for this. When they eventually replied we had to enter into interminable negotiations about where and how it was to be placed. It couldn't just be put on the grass (because someone might “slip” – what is the world coming to?) and so the rather unattractive “runway” had to be put in at considerable extra expense; we also had to insure it and give indemnities to Highways. This was entirely financed by the Variety Club and thanks are due to Norman Wiseman for initiating this and for his help and perseverance.

(5) **Pearsons Close.** The definition of “local connection” in the Section 106 agreement covering Pearsons Close was duly altered in the summer of 2015 after lengthy discussions with Braintree Housing and Suffolk Housing. Top priority is now given to someone who has lived more than 5 years in the village (previously 2). We paid Braintree's legal costs for producing the necessary documentation .

(6) **The Village Hall .** Jonathan Nott to report.

(7) **Footpaths.** Two cuts are being organised , one paid for by Braintree (who will only do one) and the other by the PC.

- (8) **Roads.** As we reported last year , there is not a lot more we can do , because the speed surveys undertaken (but this was over 3 years ago) did not reveal average speeds of significantly over 30mph. Perry Crimmins went on a training course for him (and others) to monitor speeds through the village , but discovered that it was mandatory for members of the team to be able to communicate with each other by mobile phone. As we all know there is little or no signal in the part of the village most in need of being monitored (down both hills towards the pub), so his efforts have stalled . Walkie-talkies are not allowed because they can't access the emergency services.
- (9) **Miscellaneous.** We monitor and pay for the street lighting in the village; we monitor the recycling centre next to the old football pitch; we organise the winter salt scheme (not needed this winter or last...) and report matters to Braintree or Essex when necessary.

Harry Anderson – 25th May 2016